



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee
March 3, 2022**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) **opposes SB-212 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PERMANENT PARTIAL AND PENSION OFFSETS.**

According to the fiscal note prepared by the non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis on an identical bill in 2019, SB-212 is an unfunded mandate that will result in costs to the 140 municipalities that offer defined benefit plans; costs which are difficult to determine and incorporate into future municipal budgets.

COST opposes the bill which will discourage claimants from returning to work because the amount they will be receiving in Workers' Compensation benefits would be more than what they receive when employed. Claimants would also be eligible to receive additional discretionary benefits, to be determined by the Workers' Compensation Commission, that vary based on the statutory Workers' Compensation schedule.

In addition, the bill would require that claimants continue to receive employer sponsored health benefits for both claimants and their dependents. Moreover, the bill creates a mechanism that would enable a claim to continue indefinitely until a settlement is reached, which is likely to increase costs for municipal employers.

COST is also concerned with provisions in the bill which would invalidate collective bargaining agreements between municipal employees and employers if the claimant is unhappy with the settlement. This sets a difficult precedent with respect to collective bargaining agreements and municipal budgeting.

COST urges lawmakers to take a hard line in opposition to this unfunded mandate. Given the ongoing fiscal challenges facing municipalities and the uncertain economic impact that COVID-19 will have on residents and businesses, the state must refrain from expanding or establishing any new unfunded mandates, which will make it more difficult for towns to fund the delivery of critical programs and services, including education, public health and public safety.

COST urges your opposition to SB-212.